

Lessons Learned from Catastrophe: How Organizations Responded to Hurricane Katrina

Robert Bea

Two fundamental questions from Hurricane Betsy

- 1) How did this happen?
- 2) How do we go forward

The answer: Four interesting ingredients

- 1) Severe but not extreme act of nature
- 2) The system was seriously flawed (even pre1965)
- 3) Flawed organizational complex
- 4) Tried do conserve resources and make “intelligent cost/benefit analyses”

Charles Cowley

Points of interest

- 1) Shutting down plant and doing it quickly
- 2) Getting back into production (interactive model)

Carolyn Merritt

Why the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Board is interested in Hurricane Katrina

- 1) Not one of those was a unique event that wasn't preceded by multiple warning events
- 2) Emergency preparedness is frightfully incomplete and weak

Similarities between Hurricane Katrina and chemical disasters

- 1) Lack of planning and coordination with emergency responders
- 2) Multiple warning events

Why do these issues go unaddressed?

How do we help other companies learn from missteps before they become the next victim?

Skip Skivington

One measure to determine success

- 1) How much capacity you can handle if there is a disaster?

One benefit from Hurricane Katrina

- 1) All facets of governments are being honest with themselves and other constituents

Rick Schneider

Wants to discuss the question of public and private partnerships

Will look at social and economic dynamics in catastrophes

Questions from the audience:

Julie Nunes: Was the National Corps of Engineers a high reliable organization before? If it was, what happened in Hurricane Katrina?

Bob Bea: In the past, the Corps of Engineers was an organization that was concerned with civil works. The Corps today is different. It has taken the engineering out of the Corps of Engineers. How did that happen? Better, faster, cheaper. Pressure from congress to do more with less. You then begin to understand how they have transitioned to a low reliability organization.

Peter Angood: views from the healthcare industry. The first 48-72 hours, every community that is involved with a disaster is on its own. The travesty is that all the failures were going on since 9/11. there have been numerous plans and billions of dollars yet the needed changes haven't taken place. We need mobilization for change.

Harrison from AHRQ. Professor Koenig pointed out the importance of context. If insurance companies say that they will not cover low reliability organizations, then organizations will start to move.

Carolyn Merritt: Wants to give credit to refinery industry in Gulf Coast. There was an enormous amount of infrastructure damage. Could they start up without blowing things up because of the unknowns. In that crisis, there was a lot of high reliability implementation because it was so critical to identify the unknowns.

Audience Member: It's easier to kid yourself than it is to deal with reality